PATCH

7th Car Bombing Death Here In Decade

By Marjorie Mandel
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

John Paul Spica was the seventh St. Louisan to die in an automobile bombing in this decade. All of those remain unsolved — as do many of the other car bombings that resulted in injury but not death.

According to federal crime statistics, Missouri has one of the highest bombing rates in the nation.

On April 11, in the most recent incident, Louis J. Ritter, 63, a Clarkson Valley executive, was burned severely when his car exploded into flames as he neared his residence at 149 Chippenham Drive. Ritter was president of American Water Treatment Inc., 7116 Oakland Avenue.

In the fall of 1977, two persons were killed and a third escaped injury in three car bombings in south St. Louis County. Ronald T. Sterghos, 23, was the person not injured when his car exploded Oct. 7, 1977, outside his apartment at 1148 Casa Brazilia Court.

Eleven days later, Ronald C. Jackson, a United Parcel Service supervisor, was killed when his car exploded when he switched on the ignition. His car was parked on the parking lot of the Oak Brook apartments, where he lived, at 5053 Clayridge Drive.

The third person, Shirley Marie Flynn, 33, a computer programmer, was killed Nov. 3, 1977, when a bomb ripped apart her automobile, which had been parked near her apartment at 5540 Vista Creek in the Southmoor apartment complex. Investigators said they found many similarities in the three bombings and also in the bombing of Ms. Flynn's boyfriend, William Ohlhausen, who was injured seriously when his car exploded Marh 7, 1978, outside a motel in Paducah, Ky., while he was on a business trip.

In an earlier bombing, Walter W. Eberhardt, 6448 Wise Avenue, a member of the Ironworkers Union, was killed in an auto blast in Hillsdale. On May 19, 1975, Eberhardt's car was parked on a lot between a service station and tavern in the 2100 block of Kienlen Avenue. A passenger, a student at St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, was injured seriously in the blast.

Other car bombings this decade involved union figures. Thomas J. Callanan, son of former Steamfitter Union boss Lawrence J. Callanan, lost both his legs on June 15, 1973, when his car exploded while he was driving in the 1600 block of Redman Road in Spanish Lake.

The younger Callanan had fought unsuccessfully to take over the union after the retirement and subsequent death of his father. Authorities speculated that the explosion may have been a reprisal for the killing on Feb. 24, 1972 of Edward J. Steska, who had succeeded the elder Callanan as business manager of Steamfitters Local 562.

Investigators found similarities in the bombings that injured Callanan and killed hoodlum Louis D. Shoulders, former St. Louis police lieutenant F. Lyman Davis and Continental Telephone Co. president Phillip J. Lucier, but the four bombings were never solved.

Shoulders was killed Aug. 25, 1972, when a bomb exploded as he was starting his Cadillac while on a fishing trip at Table Rock Lake in southwest Missouri.

Davis, an Overland saloon owner and associate of Shoulders, was killed by a bomb explosion in October 1972 while his car was parked on the lot of an Overland supermarket.

Lucier was killed July 24, 1970, when a bomb exploded in a company automobile on the parking lot at 7333 Forsyth Boulevard in Clayton.